A Series of Six Articles Appearing

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New York Herald Tribune

Based on a Six-Week Survey by a Team of Herald Tribune Reporters Documenting a Serious Situation in Military Aircraft Production

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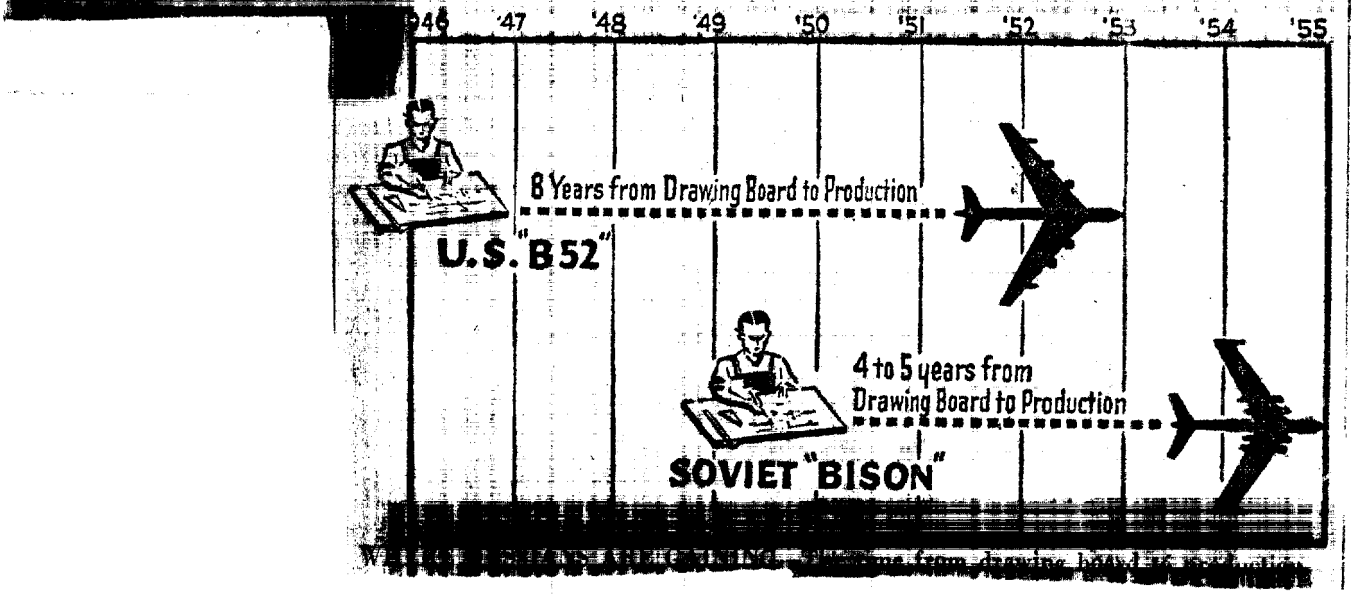
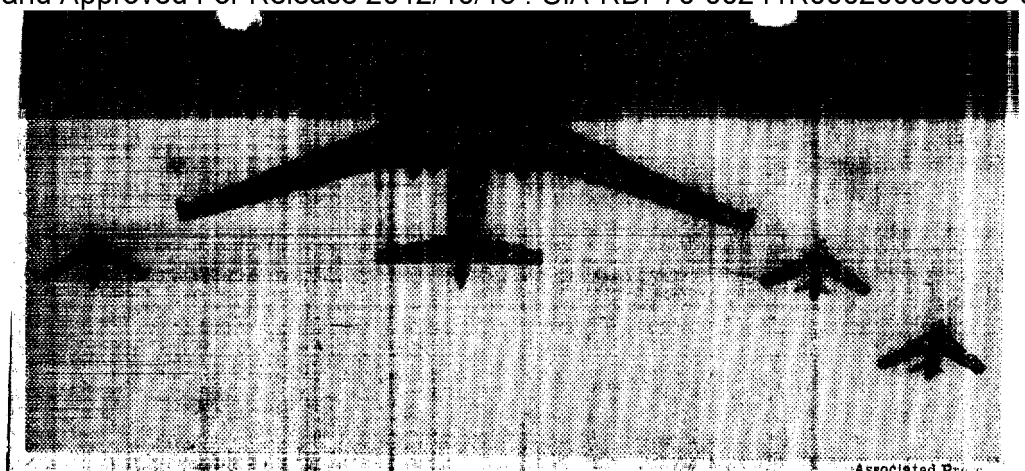
Pentagon Indecision, Red Tape Is Feared Giving Reds Air Lead

OUR ATOM-BOMB CARRIER—The 200-ton, 650-m. p. h. Boeing B52C jet bomber, which took more than eight years to get into production. It has large external fuel tanks and eight Pratt & Whitney engines, each developing [illegible] proved version, the B52D Strato-Fortress, is now in production at Boeing's Wichita,





Associated Press

THEIR A-BOMB CARRIER—The Soviet Bison, which was in production within five years. The 183-ton plane has four huge jet engines, each believed to have a thrust of [illegible] miles [illegible]

Long Lag Revealed in 'Lead Time'

U. S. Already May Be Behind

This is the first of a series of six articles based on a six-week survey by a team of New York Herald Tribune reporters documenting a serious situation in military aircraft production.

By Robert S. Bird
and Tom Lambert

Pentagon indecision in top places and a massive system of petty bureaucracy on lower levels are hamstringing this country's production of warplanes.

This conclusion is based on a six-week survey by the New York Herald Tribune. The survey was started after some manufacturers and Pentagon officials had expressed grave concern over the inefficiency, delays and muddling encountered in aircraft programs.

These worries had been voiced privately to the Herald Tribune.

[illegible] said: "[illegible] in the Pentagon in (U. S. aircraft) programs are seriously threatening this country's strength in the air."

One manufacturer whose company is developing a critically needed plane said:

"Most big industry in the United States would go bankrupt in a few months if decisions were handled as they are in the [illegible]

At stake is the national security. Today it is an open question [illegible] United States. They are fast approaching us in the quality of their new aircraft. And unless this country drastically changes today's situation, our Air Chiefs say, the U. S. S. R. soon may rule the skies.

The lag in this country's air [illegible] from inception of the first study, through all the stages of design and development to actual production.

It took the United States eight to nine years' lead time to bring into production its first B-52 heavy jet bomber. It took the U. S. S. R. four to five years to produce its Bison, the Soviet answer to the B-52.

[illegible] United States and the U. S. S. R. today.

On Production Delays

Here's what executives of leading American aircraft companies have to say about official delay and red tape in production of vitally-needed warplanes:

Robert E. Gross, president of Lockheed Aircraft Corp.: "—the Pentagon's 'system' itself is needlessly delaying the decisions we must have to get started . . ."

William Allen, president of the Boeing Airplane Co.: "There is room for improvement in the decision time" on when to start aircraft programs.

Gen. Joseph T. McNarney (U.S.A.F., Ret.), president of Convair: "Fifteen months was used up deciding on the design for the F-102."

[illegible], vice president of Convair: "Give Air [illegible]al with us enough position of authority to [illegible]e-spot decisions by themselves."

Our Air Force was astonished when a single Bison flew in the Moscow air show in 1954, proving that we no longer held the monopoly on these jet-powered carriers of nuclear weapons. There was consternation in our Air Force the following year when the Soviets flew twelve of [illegible] Bison at the 1955 air show, showing that quantities of the big bombers were being produced.

For an example of Russian speed in closing the quality gap that is—or has been—our margin of superiority in the air:

It took the United States five years—from 1948 to 1953—to produce our first supersonic fighter, the F-100 Super Sabre. By the spring of 1955—and possibly earlier—the U. S. S. R. was producing scores of its supersonic fighter, the Farmer. At the 1955 Moscow air show, the Soviets publicly exhibited forty-eight of these swept-wing warplanes.

Another example of Soviet effort to win air supremacy:

During World War II the United States experimented with jet engines, but the Soviets did little or nothing then in that field. Yet by 1954 the U. S. S. R. had turned out a jet engine with an estimated 20,000 pounds thrust, far more powerful than anything this country had. Only now are we starting to produce an engine in that class, the General Electric J-79. The Soviets, in the meantime, have had two years to improve their 1954 engine.

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[redacted] the air lead.

Why is this country slow in turning out advanced-type aircraft, jet engines and electronic equipment for warplanes?

In an attempt to pinpoint the causes, this team of Herald Tribune reporters visited aircraft, jet engine and electronics plants from the East to the West coast. And many of the top Pentagon officials were consulted.

Two Main Reasons For Time Lag

As manufacturers examined with these reporters the life histories of some of today's and tomorrow's combat planes, there emerged two broad reasons for excessive lead time in getting new airplanes into the air.

1. Indecision in Pentagon aircraft planning and programming, and Air Force conservatism and rigidity in holding manufacturers to Air Force "rules" while the plane is being built. Intelligence reports indicate that Soviet aircraft programming is much more direct and decisive.

2. The sudden, new complexity of supersonic-electronic warplanes. In itself, this automatically is extending lead time. This applies to the U. S. S. R. as well as to this country.

Coinciding with these findings from manufacturers came a surprisingly frank admission from an Air Force general who participates on the top level in United States' aircraft programs.

For obvious reasons—including a recent recommendation by a Defense Department committee that officials be disciplined if they publicly discuss security matters—the general would not allow his name to be used.

Administrative Delay Assailed by General

"One of the major factors in lead time is administrative delay," he said. "That adds perhaps 20 or 25 per cent to production time."

Explaining administrative delay, almost as if echoing bitter complaints from some manufacturers, he laid much of the blame on an ever-growing number of Defense Department and A[redacted] group[redacted] aircra[redacted] under [redacted]

[redacted] or change something, approvals from multiple committees are necessary."

He further pointed out that the Air Force must justify its aircraft programs annually to Congress to obtain funds to carry them out, and must explain its programs whenever there is a change of high-ranking personnel in the Air Force or the Administration.

Manufacturers Suggest Saving

"The B-52 program was well under way when Harold Talbott came in as Air Force secretary (in 1953)," he said. "It had to be justified to him. When Talbott left and Donald Quarles took over as secretary, the program had to be explained and justified again."

All the aircraft manufacturers interviewed agree that lead time can be reduced—even sharply slashed. This is the way, they say, to do it:

1. Cut the decision time in the Pentagon. Major green-light decisions are stalled for months and even years while Pentagon boards, committees, study groups, agencies and sub-agencies fight out their differences on aircraft projects to final, belated agreement.

(EXAMPLE—The B-52 was conceived as a study project in 1946. But not until 1949 did the Air Force authorize engineering work on a prototype.

(EXAMPLE—The J-79 jet engine now is being produced but the Pentagon has not yet authorized—after a year of discussion and study—the manufacturing research for the next generation of jet engines which must power the long-range bombers of 1970.)

Drawing Board To Firing Line

2. End the red tape and rivers of paper work imposed on manufacturers by lower-echelon Air Force supervisory groups which hang over the aircraft producers' shoulders all the way from drawing board to flight line.

(EXAMPLE—"We have to struggle daily through a mass of bureaucratic pulp," said one expert supervising production of a much-needed fighter. "We are making this airplane despite the Air Force.")

3. Provide smoother programming and funding for advanced research, on such projects as pocket-sized power plants to [redacted] tires to withstand [redacted] several times the boiling [redacted] of water.

[redacted] digging in a clam bed," said Robert E. Gross, president of the Lockheed Aircraft Corp., makers of the F-104 "Starfighter," the world's best ultra-sonic, lightweight fighter plane.

Pentagon 'System' Adds to Delays

("With all respect to the many highly competent [redacted] the decisions we [redacted]

("Then, when we get those first decisions and build a prototype of a new plane, we enter into another period of waiting while the Pentagon makes up its mind about the go-ahead for production.")

(EXAMPLE — William Allen, president of the Boeing Airplane Co., which makes the B-52, long-range, nuclear bomb carrier, told the Herald Tribune that, although Pentagon problems are complex, "there is room for improvement in the dec[redacted] time.")

(EXAMPLE—J. O. Yea[redacted] vice-president for finance [redacted] a director of Boeing, said [redacted] "paper work nuisance and [redacted]cessive supervision of manufacturing detail" are hampering factors in reducing aircraft-lead time.)

(EXAMPLE—Gen. Joseph T. McNarney (U. S. A. F., Ret.), president of Convair, producer of the new supersonic F-102 all-weather fighter-interceptor and the supersonic B-58, medium jet bomber, says:

("The biggest time-wasting factor is in the design phase. Fifteen months was used up deciding on the design for the F-102."

(EXAMPLE — Tom Lanphier, Convair vice-president for planning, said, "A great deal of lead time on aircraft production could be saved by formalizing the real faith the military has in industry. Actually, a close alliance and feeling of joint responsibility prevails between us, but still we have to go through all the pro forma motions just as if this faith did not exist. Give Air Force officers who deal with us enough position of authority to make effective, on-the-spot decisions by themselves. Then formally give us the management responsibility they feel we can handle to get the job done quickly.")

In essence, manufacturers ask the Pentagon and Air Force to apply to aircraft programs the [redacted] airplanes.

[redacted] the Pentagon, despite [redacted] questioning, defends its [redacted] manufacturers' complaints about United States' warplane programs, Air Force Secretary Donald Quarles gave the Herald Tribune this answer:

"We could tell a manufacturer to get out an aircraft in one-third the time it takes today, but that aircraft then [redacted] obsolete when we got it. [redacted] they are on the production line—the latest aeronautical advances and developments. "We try to reach the best compromise," Mr. Quarles said, "and we're not always sure if we do."

But, he added, just because aircraft manufacturers criticize Air Force aircraft programs is no proof the programs are faulty. To the manufacturers' complaints about Air Force "interference," Mr. Quarles replied, "You cannot say they (the pro-[redacted] worse."